

THE ORIGIN OF AVALOKITA-SVARA/AVALOKIT-EŚVARA

Complex systems of thought lie embedded in the silent enigmas of Avalokita-svara ~ Avalokit-eśvara ~ Lokeśvara. From an attendant acolyte of Amitābha in the *Sukhāvātī-vyūha*, A. gained independence as a separate deity in his own right, while the worship of his prototype Brahmā ceased, until the great Ādi-Śaṅkarā-cārya resurrected Brahmā (masc.) as the abstract Brahman (neut.). The Potala Lokeśvara holds the mysteries of Harihara, the Deva-rāja cult and a key to the enigmatic faces at Angkor. From hymns he has incarnated into statues to become Things of our earth, to celebrate the cosmos in the surety of living, to carry eternal depths to the eyes of the faithful of the earth: beauté (fem.) or beauty sculpted in the round, to give birth to a state of open symbolism. These psychotropic images open meditative worlds of well-being, happiness and bliss so that the human possesses all becomings. Common men exalt their being in the vision of these images of Avalokita-svara sublimed by words (*svara*) of transcendence.

The etymology and theogony of Avalokita-svara/Avalokit-eśvara has been discussed by several scholars, like Burnouf (1844), Grünwedel (1900), Zimmer (1922), Mironov (1927), Vallée Poussin (1909), Takakusu (1914), Staël-Holstein (1936), Mallmann (1948), Yutaka (1982), and several others. These views have been detailed *in extenso* by Mallmann (1948: 59-82 le nom d'Avalokiteçvara) and hence we shall not repeat all the observations. All of them have missed

the origin of A. and thus the etymology and variants of the name have remained obscure.

## NOMENCLATURE

Three forms of the Sanskrit name are found: (i) Avalokita, (ii) Avalokita-svara, (iii) Avalokit-eśvara.

*Avalokita*. The name Avalokita occurs in Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* 2.51 (7th cent.): *taṁ cĀvalokitaṁ nātham*. Prajñākaramati's commentary (edited by L. de la Vallée Poussin, 1901:66) on this stanza: *sa bhagavān Avalokitaḥ*. The great Sanskrit-German dictionary *PW* cites Avalokita = Avalokiteśvara from the three dictionaries: *Trikāṇḍaśeṣa*, *Anekārthasaṅgraha*, and *Medinī*. *Avalokito nā Lokanāthe, tṛṣṇu nirīkṣite* (*Medinī-kośa* 1940:71.230). The *Anekārtha-saṅgraha* of Hemacandra 5.20 says *Avalokitas tu Buddhe, apy avalokitam īkṣite*. The Tibetan name *Spyan-ras-gzigs* is an honorific literary translation of Avalokita.

Staël-Holstein (1936:357) cites « Lord Avalokita » from Kern's English version of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* (SBE 21.406-407), which is wrong. The Sanskrit text clearly has the word Avalokiteśvara throughout. He cites Avalokita-lokeśvara from Cordier 2.154 (21) which is a reconstruction by Cordier, whereas the original Tibetan xylograph has the transliteration Avalokiteśvara. He quotes Avalokita from Cordier 2.308 (63), 2.316 (128, 129, 130)). All these four titles are reconstructions and are without value. Bhattacharyya (1958:411 fig. 44) illustrates Avalokita Lokeśvara, which is Avalokiteśvara Lokeśvara in the drawings of Siddhimuni Sakya (Lokesh Chandra 1981:44 fig. 64). Even this entry is doubtful. I (1981) have shown that the names of the 108 Lokeśvaras (not Avalokiteśvaras) in Bhattacharyya are misread in several places, and are unreliable. Staël-Holstein (1936:352) cites the Chinese *Kuan-shih-tzū-tsai* 觀世自在 from Hsi-yü Chi (T. 51.883b) and Eitel's *Handbook* 25. Though the Chinese can be literally rendered as Avalokita-lokeśvara, this compound is not attested anywhere in Sanskrit. In fact, *loka* was deemed to be implicit in Avalokita. Avalokita was early understood as including *loka*. So the Chinese *Kuan-shih-tzū-tsai* cannot be taken for certain as standing for Avalokita-lok-eśvara.

*Avalokit-eśvara*. This name occurs in the Sanskrit version of the *Sukhāvati-vyūha* for the first time. The *Sukhāvati-vyūha* was translated into Chinese by Saṅghavarman in A. D. 252 (Nj 27, K 26). Saṅghavarman translated A. as Kuan-shih-yin 觀世音 (lit. \* Avalokita-loka-svara, a compound not met with in any Sanskrit text). Kuan-shih-yin stands for Avalokita-svara. Mallmann (1948:71) discusses the Chinese term at length. The translation of Saṅghavarman raises a doubt whether the original reading in the third-century Sanskrit manuscript was not Avalokita-svara. The name Avalokiteśvara seems to be later, influenced by Īśvara = Śiva, which shows the interaction of Śaivism and the worship of Avalokiteśvara. This name had crystallized by the time when Hsüan-tsang completed his Travels/Hsi-yü Chi in A.D. 646. In the third chapter of his Travels (T. 51.883b) Hsüan-tsang opines that Kuan-tzū-tsai = Avalokiteśvara is the correct name. By his time Avalokiteśvara must have been the prevalent name (Staël-Holstein 1936:354).

Avalokita-svara occurs five times on one incomplete leaf of an ancient Sanskrit manuscript of the fifth century written in Indian characters which has been found in Eastern Turkestan. It is a fragment of the 24th chapter of the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*, brought back by Count K. Otani's expedition. « As the name occurs five times on an incomplete leaf, the possibility of a clerical error is hardly admissible. The circumstance is especially important, as the Petrovsky ms. of *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* from Kashgar has the usual form Avalokiteśvara. Thus a hereto missing link between the Indian and Chinese traditions seems to have been found. It cannot be doubted that Avalokitasvara was the original form, later supplanted by Avalokiteśvara » (Mironov 1927:243). That this is not a scribal error is clear from the Sanskrit-Chinese dictionary of Fa-yün compiled in A. D. 1151, Fan-i Ming-i Chi 翻譯名義集 (T 2131, 54.1062a, Nj 1640) which admits that sūtras written north of the Himalayas have *svara* meaning « sound » (instead of śvara) (Staël-Holstein 1936:353). Ch'ang-kuan the fourth patriarch of the Avataṃsaka school states in his commentary on the Avataṃsaka-vaipulya-sūtra written during A. D. 784-787 (KS 1, Nj 1589, T 1735): « In the Sanskrit originals themselves two different names of the Bodhisattva occur. It is due to this difference in the Sanskrit origi-

nals that the Chinese translators of these same originals differ as to the names of the Bodhisattva » (Staël-Holstein 1936:353-354).

Chih Ch'ien, in his translation of the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* (T 474, Nj 147) done in the years A. D. 223-228 (K 120), translates Avalokita-svara 闍音 (T 14.519b, Staël-Holstein 1936:354 n. 9). Kumārajīva who translated the same *sūtra* 178 years later in A. D. 406 (K. 119) rendered A. by the earlier and popular name Kuan-shih-yin (T 475:14.537b, Nj 146) wherein the final element is *svara*.

The name Kuan-yin 觀音 = Avalokita-svara occurs in the title of two commentaries (T 1726 = Nj 1555, T 1728 = 1557) of Chisha daishi the founder of the Tendai sect who lived from A. D. 538 to 598 (Hobogirin 1978:238-239).

From the above we come to the following conclusions:

- (1) The Chinese sources clearly indicate that there were two forms of the Sanskrit name: Avalokita-svara and Avalokit-eśvara.
- (2) The earliest Sanskrit name was Avalokita-svara.
- (3) With the seeping in of Śaiva influence the name became Avalokit-eśvara (Īśvara = Śiva). This process can be seen clearly in the Nilakaṇṭha or Potala Lokeśvara/Avalokiteśvara (Lokesh Chandra 1979).
- (4) During the indeterminate phase when it was not clear as to which of the two names Avalokita-svara or Avalokit-eśvara should be used, the abbreviated form Avalokita must have become popular, as in evidenced by Sanskrit texts and the widely prevalent Tibetan Spyān-ras-gzigs = Avalokita.
- (5) The reconstructed forms \* Avalokita-lokeśvara and \* Avalokita-loka-svara used by Poussin, Staël-Holstein and others without any indication that they are artificial creations and continued by Mallmann, lead to confusion. They should be avoided.

*Chinese names.* Chinese has the following six names:

- K'o-lou-hsüan, Jap. Ko-rō-kō 庵樓亘 (used once by the author)  
 K'uei-yin, Jap. Kion 闍音 (used once by the author)  
 Kuan-shih-yin, Jap. Kanzeon 觀世音  
 Kuang-shih-yin, Jap. Kōzeon 光世音 (used once by the author)  
 Kuan-yin, Jap. Kannon 觀音  
 Kuang-tzū-tsai, Jap. Kanjizai 觀自在

The chronology of these names is shown below:

A. D.

- 147-186 K'o-lou-hsüan = Skt. a-lo-śva?, Lokakṣema: *Sukhāvati-vyūha* (Nj 25, T 361, K 24)
- 223-228 K'uei-yin, Chih Ch'ien: *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa* (Nj 147, T 474, K 120)
- 252 Kuan-shih-yin, Saṅghavarman: *Sukhāvati-vyūha* (T 360, K 26)
- 252 Kuan-shih-yin, Saṅghavarman: *Gṛhapati-Ugra-paripṛcchā* (T 310/19, K 22/19)
- 286 Kuang-shih-yin 光世音 « Light on the world's voice », Dharmarakṣa: *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* (T 263, K 117, Yutaka 1982:28)
- 374-426 Kuan-shih-yin, Fu-liang: *Kuan-shih-yin-ying-yen-chi* « Record of Miraculous Efficacy of A. » (Yutaka 1982:28)
- 399-414 Kuan-shih-yin, Fa-hsien: Travels (Legge 1886:14, Giles 1923: 123). Fa-hsien says that followers of Mahāyāna revere A. On his way back home he himself prayed to Him during a gale (Legge 1886:112-113)
- 406 Kuan-shih-yin, Kumārajīva: *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* (T 262, K 116)
- 414-421 Kuan-shih-yin, Dharmakṣema: *Karuṇā-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* (T 157, K 126)
- 418-422 Kuan-shih-yin, Buddhabhadra: *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* (T 278, K 79)
- 501 Kuan-shih-yin, Lu Kao: *Hsi Kuan-shih-yin-ying-yen-chi* « A Collected Record of the Miracles of A. » (Yutaka 1982: 28-29)
- 538-598 Kuan-yin, Chisha daishi (T 1726 = Nj 1555, T 1728 = Nj 1557)
- 593-628 In the reign of Empress Sui-ko, Prince Shōtoku built the Yume-dono or Hall of Dreams in the Horyuji to meditate on A. (Takakusu 1914:763)

- 601 Kuan-shih-yin, Jñānagupta and Dharmagupta: *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* (T 264, K 118)
- 646 Kuan-tzū-tsai, Hsüan-tsang: *Hsi-yü Chi* (Nj 1503, T 2087, K 1065)
- 660-663 Kuan-tzū-tsai, Hsüan-tsang: *Mahāprajñāpāramitā* (T 220, K 1)
- 695-699 Kuan-tzū-tsai, Śikṣānanda: *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* (T 279, K 80)
- 784-787 Kuan-tzū-tsai & Kuan-shih-yin (two names), *Ch'êng-kuan*, commentary on the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* (Nj 1589, T 1735, KS 1)
- 828 Wên-tsung ordered that an image be set up and worshipped in 44,600 monasteries of the empire (Takakusu 1914:763)

From the above chronological synopsis of Chinese names, six points are clear:

- (1) The earliest name was Avalokita-svara, as evidenced by Chih Ch'ien's translation K'uei-yin.
- (2) When the original meaning got dimmed, the Chinese translators took the term *loka* « world » (Chin. 世 shih) implied in avalokita (Yutaka 1982:14) and translated A. as Kuan-shih-yin « He who listens to the cries of the world ». This was part of the developing bhakti trend in Buddhism wherein the prime function of A. came to be to hearken to the needs of his devotees in the world. Kumārajīva popularized this term by his use in the Lotus Sūtra in A. D. 406.
- (3) I have not been able to ascertain the earliest use of the name Kuan-yin. It was employed in the sixth century by Chisha Daishi the founder of the Tendai sect in his commentary on Kumārajīva's separate translation of the chapter on Avalokiteśvara (Nj 137). Hence onwards the worship of Avalokita was adopted by all sects, and the name Kuan-yin, Jap. Kannon became popular.
- (4) Till the time of Hsüan-tsang all the Chinese translations invariably end in 音 yin « svara ».

- (5) In A. D. 646, Hsüan-tsang translated Avalokit-eśvara as Kuan-tzū-tsai, where tzū-tsai = īśvara. For the first time he discarded the form ending in *svara* and adopted the form with *īśvara*, namely Avalokit-eśvara. This must have been the prevalent usage in India during his time. Fifty years later Śikṣānanda followed his usage.
- (6) The alteration of *svara* and *īśvara* was explained by the fact that Svara = Īśvara, Śabda is Brahman, just as « the seminal Logos of the Stoics, when spoken of a single Power, is God Himself as the organic principle of the cosmic process... » (ERE.8.134b).

### THEOGONY OF A.

*Fundamental cosmology of Heaven and Earth.* The substantive origin and correct appellation of A. become intelligible when we go back to the very foundations. Both the Indic and Indo-European traditions have Father Heaven (*dyaus pitar*) and Mother Earth (*pr̥thivī mātār*). *Dyāvā-pr̥thivī* « Heaven and Earth » are indissolubly connected in nature. Heaven and Earth as a divine pair are the source of all things. They occur as a pair in six hymns of the Ṛg-veda (Macdonell 126). The two are called *rodasī*, the two worlds, an expression occurring over a hundred times in the RV. The word *rodasī* continues to exist in the Russian language and it became the inspiring battle-cry of the Russians in the Second World War: *zhiviat rodina mat* = Sanskrit *jīvyāt rodasī mātā*: Long live Mother Earth. The heaven was represented by *Śakra* and the earth (*sahā*) by *Brahmā*: *Śakro devānām Indro Brahmā ca sahāṃpatiḥ* (*Kāraṇḍavyūha*, ed. P. L. Vaidya 258.20). Heaven and Earth represent the totality of space, for supreme awareness takes place and is sanctified in spatial symbolism (Tucci 1949:1.263 n. 279). Lord Buddha as the Supreme Cakravartin of all space and time, is naturally attended upon by *Śakra* the king (*indra*) of gods or heaven and by *Brahmā* the lord of the earth (*sahā*). When Lord Buddha was born, *Śakra* and *Brahmā* attended upon him: « it was accepted as absolute fact that only divine hands could be worthy of receiving the

Bodhisattva when he came from his mother's body. ...Indra and Brahmā officiated as midwives... On the early monuments with figures, Indra is closer at hand while Brahmā is pushed further back because of the perspective, or even to the other side of the panel... When Hsüan-Tsang visited the park of Lumbinī, he was shown the two places side by side: one where Indra had received and swaddled the miraculous infant and the other where the "Four Celestial Kings" had done the same with the same divine cloths » (Foucher 1963:33). When Lord Buddha attained Enlightenment, Brahmā held a white parasol over His head (*Buddhavaṃsa* commentary, PTS.287), and offered a chain of jewels (*ratna-dāma*) as large as Sumeru (*Khuddakapāṭha* comm. PTS.171, *Vinayapiṭaka* comm. PTS.1.115, *Visuddhimagga* PTS.1.201). Brahmā appeared to Lord Śākyamuni and said that if the World-honoured One, failed to teach the truth, the world would become darker than it already was. « As an outcome of the pleading of Brahmā, Śākyamuni decided to teach the truth to which he had been enlightened. And when he had arrived at a method of making his message as easy to understand as possible, he concluded his weeks of meditation and began his teaching » (Mizuno 1980:30). In the Pāli tradition Brahmā recited a verse exhorting the Buddha to preach as there were those who would understand (*Saṃyutta-nikāya* PTS.1.137f., 233), and he uttered a verse immediately after the nirvāṇa of Lord Buddha (*Saṃyutta-nikāya* 158, *Dīgha-nikāya* 2.157). Brahmā Sahāṃpati was the senior-most of all Brahmās (*jeṭṭha-mahā Brahmā*, *Dīgha-nikāya* 2.36f., *Dīgh.* comm. 2.467, *Dialogues of the Buddha* 2.30 n.4).

*Buddha the cakravartin attended by the Kings of Heaven and Earth Indra and Brahmā.* Lord Buddha was and acted like a *cakravartin*. He turned the *dharmacakra*: the term *dharmacakra-pravar-tana* has been borrowed from the terminology of royalty. When Lord Buddha was to attain *nirvāṇa*, Ānanda « asked how the ceremony should be carried out. Shakyamuni replied that it should be the kind of funeral afforded to a *cakravartin* king and then explained in detail » (Mizuno 1980:186). The *Mahāpadāna-sutta* says the birth of a *cakravartin* is attended by the same miracles as that of a Buddha and likewise his youth. Both have the attributes of a *mahāpuruṣa*. A *cakravartin* deserves a *stūpa* like a Buddha (*Dīgha-*



*nikāya* 2.143). « With the appearance of a Cakkavatti there appear seven treasures in the world; similarly, with the appearance of a Tathāgata there appear the seven treasures of wisdom-mindfulness, searching of the Dhamma, energy, zest, tranquillity, concentration, equanimity » (*Cakkavatti-sutta* of *Saṃyutta-nikāya* 5.99, Malalasekera 1937:1.833). As the supreme cakravartin Lord Buddha was attended on by the Lords of both Heaven and Earth, namely, Indra and Brahmā. Sharma (1978:37-39) has collected references to them from *Mahāvastu*, *Divyāvadāna*, *Avadāna-śataka*, and *Jātaka-mālā*. As acolytes of the Buddha, the two divine kings became symbolized as *brahma ca kṣtraṇi ca* of the Ṛgveda, namely, knowledge and power, wisdom and impirium. They thus entered a world of creativity and of new mythopoetics: now they could be transformed and transcreated.

*Indra and Brahmā flank Lord Buddha in sculpture.* Brahmā and Indra attend on Lord Buddha as adorants in the oldest sculptures from Gandhara and Mathura. They stand to His left and right. Their position to the left or right is not fixed in the early images. Brahmā has the hairdo of an ascetic and Indra wears a turban. Images from Gandhara, Butkara I and Swat show Brahmā and Indra entreating the Buddha to preach (Leeuw 1979:fig. 11, 12, 13, 32, 33, 34, 35). So does a relief in the Peshawar Museum (Leeuw 1949:176 fig. 25). The Kaniška reliquary found in the great *stūpa* at Shāh-jī-kī Dherī of the reign of Kaniška I shows Indra and Brahmā with hands folded in *añjali* flanking the Buddha (Dobbins 1971:25, Leeuw 1949:99). The two divine kings flank the seated Buddha of the kapardin type found at Kaṭṭrā (Mathura Museum, Leeuw 1949:fig. 31), another broken image of a seated Buddha of the kapardin type now at Boston (Leeuw 1949:fig. 32), a relief found in the Jail Mound at Mathura (Lucknow Museum, Leeuw 1949:fig. 33). Brahmā and Indra formed a « permanent couple » on either side of the Master. This tradition goes back to very ancient aniconic times when we find the two great gods in adoration of an empty seat under the Bodhi tree on a railing pillar from Mahaban (Mathura Museum no.2663, Leeuw 1949:176 n. 111). In the Gupta and Pala sculptures, Brahmā can be recognized by his four heads and Indra by his *vajra*.

*Transcendence of Buddha, Indra and Brahmā.* With the rise of transcendental tendencies in Buddhism, Śākyamuni the Man was replaced by Amitābha. His historic Enlightenment was transcended into Supreme Enlightenment whose illumination became the new dynamized centre reflected in the new Tathāgata Amitābha. A deliberate effort was made to change the morphology and nomenclature of an emerging form of Buddhism, and to emphasize its unceasing development. The Larger *Sukhāvatī-vyūha* is set forth by Śākyamuni to a question by Ānanda. The Buddha relates that there was a line of 81 Tathāgatas beginning with Dīpaṅkara and ending with Lokeśvararāja. In the period of Lokeśvararāja, Dharmākara a king turned monk resolves to become a Buddha. Dharmākara meditates and reappears before Lokeśvararāja. He describes at length the land of bliss or Sukhāvatī in his 48 vows. All the details are related by Śākyamuni to Ānanda who thereupon asks the present whereabouts of Dharmākara. Śākyamuni replies that he is reigning in Sukhāvatī as Buddha Amitābha. ... Dharmākara may be an actual monk of this tradition who systematized and wrote down the cult and doctrine of Amitābha.

*Transcendence leads to change of nomenclature.* Śākyamuni was flanked by Brahmā and Śakra. But when Śākyamuni became Amitābha, the attendant acolytes changed names: Brahmā became Avalokita-svara and Śakra became Mahāsthāmaprāpta. Brahmā envisions the mantras and as the upholder of the vision enshrined in mantras He holds the Four Vedas in His hands. He is the supreme symbol of brahma-ghoṣa, the revealed Word of mantras. In the new terminology He was *Avalokita* « seer » + of *svara* « Word, Logos ». We have already noted that the form Avalokita-svara is actually found in Central Asian manuscripts. The Chinese Kuan-yin and Japanese Kannon is *Kuan/kan* « see » + *yin/on* « sound », a translation of Avalokita-svara. Śakra means « The Powerful One » from the root *śak* « to be powerful », and so does *mahā* « great » + *sthāma* « power, stamina » + *prāpta* « attained ».

*Śakra/Indra becomes Mahāsthāmaprāpta.* The metamorphosis of Śakra/Indra to Mahāsthāmaprāpta goes back to his earliest characterization in the *Ṛgveda*. Śakra is from the root *śak*, from which is derived *śakti* « power ». Both Śakra and Mahāsthāmaprāpta sym-

bolize might. Indra wields the *vajra* and it exhilarates him to carry out his warlike deeds (Macdonell 56). The gigantic size and fierce might of Indra is dwelt upon in many passages of the *Rgveda*: « When Indra grasped the two boundless worlds, they were but a handful to him (RV.3.30.5). ...His greatness and power are lauded in the most unstinted terms. ...No one, god or man, either surpasses or equals him (RV.6.30.4). Neither former, later, nor recent beings have attained to his valour (RV.5.42.6). Neither gods nor men nor waters have attained to the limit of his might (RV.1.100.15). ...All the gods yield to him in might and strength (RV.8.51.7). Even the former gods subordinated their powers to his divine glory and kingly dignity (RV.7.21.7). All the gods are unable to frustrate his deeds and counsels (RV.2.32.4) » (Macdonell 57-58). « Indra, the wielder of the thunderbolt, who destroys the aerial demons in battle, is constantly invoked by warriors » (Macdonell 62). « Regarded as a whole the attributes of Indra are chiefly those of physical superiority and of dominion over the physical world. Energetic action is characteristic of him, while passive sway is distinctive of Varuṇa. Indra is a universal monarch, not as the applier of the eternal laws of the universe nor as a moral ruler, but as an irresistible warrior whose mighty arm wins victory » (Macdonell 64). In continuation of the Vedic tradition, he was rightly termed one who has attained (*prāpta*) mighty (*mahā*) prowess (*sthāma*). The new name celebrated the main attribute of Indra, namely, dominating superiority and energetic action.

The Pāli *Dhammapad-aṭṭhakathā* 4.105f. mentions Indra as a giver of punishment to guilty people with his thunderbolt (*Inda-vajira*, Halder 1977:84). « In the fourteenth Sutta of Saṃyutta-nikāya, Sakka explains how new gods, who outshine the old ones, do so because they observe the Buddha's teachings » (Halder 1977: 85). He is spoken of as the lord of victors in *Jātakas* 5.322 (*jayatam pati*), and he is the embodiment of the greatest valour (*Mahāvamsa* 30.10). He is called Vajira-hattha in the *Dīgha-nikāya* 2.259. The sound of Indra's thunderbolt striking its victim, surpasses all other sounds by its intensity, its volume and its fearfulness no obstruction can stop the progress of Indra's Vajira and it never misses its mark (Malalasekera 1937:1.309-310). Mahāsthāmaprāpta con-

tinues to hold the *vajra* in his hand. Later on he developed into Vajrapāṇi and Ākāśagarbha. Buddhaghōṣa tells us that Vajrapāṇi is the same as Sakka (A.K. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, p. 30).

*Brahmā becomes A.* Brahmā, the other adorant of the pair, was renamed Avalokita-svara and he held a lotus in his hand. Brahmā represents *brahman* the sacred word. He is Vāgīśvara (Liebert 1976:46). He envisions the mantras (*mantra-draṣṭā*). In the Amitāyurdhyāna-sūtra A. is the great *vidyādhīpati*, and he is in possession of hundreds of mantras: *aneka-mantra-śatā-vakīrṇa* (E.B.2.259b). Svara, the second member of the compound of Avalokita-svara rightly characterizes him. The association of Brahmā with *brahma-ghoṣa* or the *Vedas* needs no detailing. The *Vedas*, envisaged as the Eternal-Law (*Dharma*), the scheme of the universe, spring from Brahmā and return into him. Brahmā is also the Great Lord of Speech (*Bṛhas-pati*), the First-Seer (*Ādi-kavi*) (Daniélou 1964:234, 235). In his four hands he can hold the four *Vedas*. Brahma-svara is the name of a former Buddha in the *Mahāvastu* 3.231.11f. In *Samādhirāja* 57.7f. the names of two former Buddhas are Brahmeśvara.

Just as Brahmā is *Caturānana* or *Caturmukha* « Four-faced » (*Amarakośa* 1.1.16-18) so is Avalokita-svara. The 24th chapter of the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* calls him Samantamukha or facing all the four directions. The *Rūpa-maṇḍana* says that the four faces of Brahmā represent the four *Vedas*: *Ṛgveda*, *Sāmaveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Atharvaveda* (*Ṛgvedādi-prabhēdena...catur-vaktraṃ caturbhujam*).

Brahmā is born of the lotus: he is Abja-ja, Abja-yoni, Kamala-yoni, Kañ-ja, Kañja-ja, Sarojin (Liebert 1976:46). Avalokita-svara prominently sports the lotus in his hand, in keeping with his originator Brahmā.

Brahmā holds a water-gourd (*Brahmā kamaṇḍalu-dharaḥ kartavyaḥ sa caturmukhaḥ*, *Matsya-purāṇa* 259.40). Avalokita-svara with a vase abounds in Japanese iconography, for example, the A. at Dōmyōji monastery at Osaka (Yoshiaki 1969:fig.80). The earliest wooden sculptures of A. with vase are the Kudara Kannon and Kumen Kannon in the Daihōzōden Repository of the Hōryūji monastery (Kuno 1966: fig. 57, 58 and 60).

Brahmā Sahāṃpati is the lord of the earth (*sahā*). He is Lokeśa in the Amarakośa 1.1.16. Avalokita-svara too is Loka-nātha and Lokeśvara. The ideograph *shih* 世 « world, loka » in the Chinese translations reflects this fundamental characteristic of A.

It is clear that Brahmā was transcreated into Avalokita-svara. In the earliest periods, the Chinese renderings of the term show *yin* 音 = *svara*. The original and correct term therefore is Avalokita-svara, preserved in Chinese Kuan-[shih-]yin = Japanese Kan-[ze-]on to this day. Avalokiteśvara was a later hyper-Sanskritization, when the underlying meaning of the term had been lost.

The earliest and superb masterpiece painting of Amitābha with Mahāsthāmaprāpta to the right and A. to the left is the mural done on Wall 6 of the Golden Hall (Kondō) of the Hōryūji monastery in the seventh century.

*Preeminence of A.* The Bodhisattvas are not equal among themselves. In the « heaven of Amitābha there are two, Avalokita and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, almost as great and luminous as Buddha, who sit on thrones equal to his. Avalokita is the more majestic; this is due to his vow to bring all beings, without exception, into the « happy land ». And while his glorious body illumines a great many worlds, he traverses them all in different forms, sometimes real and sometimes magical; like Amitābha himself, he has parts of himself incarnated here and there; he never forgets for a moment his role as provider of the Sukhāvati » (Poussin 1909:ERE.2.258b). Avalokita-svara is called Sukhāvatisvara in the lexicon *Trikāṇḍa-śeṣa*. The predominance of Avalokita-svara over Mahāsthāmaprāpta can also be explained by his antecedent deity. Like Avalokita-svara, his origin Brahmā Sahāṃpati was a mighty and powerful Mahābrahmā (*Saṃyutta-nikāya* 5.410 quoted in Malalasekera 1960:338). A. became an independent deity and gained perennial popularity that has continued to our day. His wide vogue led to the incorporation of a number of other deities into His many forms, like Nīla-kaṇṭha Lokeśvara with or without a thousand arms.

*Further transformations.* The transformation of Indra into Mahāsthāmaprāpta, and of Brahmā into Avalokita-svara, continued to evolve into new deities. Two new pairs developed:

Indra	Brahmā
Māhāsthāmaprāpta	Avalokita-svara
Vajrapāṇi	Padmapāṇi
Ākāśagarbha	Kṣitigarbha

The pair of Vajrapāṇi and Padmapāṇi symbolize the attributes held in the hands, while Ākāśagarbha and Kṣitigarbha stress the spatial dominions of Heaven (*ākāśa*) and Earth (*kṣiti*) of the pair. In the Garbhadhātu maṇḍala of the eighth century Vajrapāṇi and Padmapāṇi flank Vairocana. So do they stand to the right and left of Vairocana the central deity of the eighth century Caṇḍi Mendut at Yogyakarta (Indonesia). The Sang Hyang Kamahāyānikan (10th cent.) speaks of Śākyamuni flanked by Lokeśvara on the right and Vajrapāṇi on the left. Lokeśvara is of red colour and in *dhyāna-mudrā*. Vajrapāṇi is blue and in *bhūḥsparsa-mudrā* (p. 60). The trinity is equated as follows:

	<i>tattva</i> (p. 63)	<i>triratna</i> (p. 64)
Śākyamuni	<i>artha</i>	Buddha
Lokeśvara	<i>kāma</i>	<i>dharma</i>
Vajrapāṇi	<i>śabda</i>	<i>saṅgha</i>

In the Lha-khañ of the Lotsava, attributed by tradition to Rin-chen-bzañ-po (A. D. 958-1055), remain great stucco statues of Śākyamuni seated in the middle, Maitreya and Mañjuśrī, Padmapāṇi and Vajrapāṇi standing at his two sides (Tucci & Ghersi 1935:183). These go back to the early times of the Buddhist revival in the land of Guge. Thus we can discern several transformations of the original pair of Indra and Brahmā flanking Lord Buddha.

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